

POLITICAL PARTY QUALIFICATION PROCESS, REQUIREMENTS, HISTORY

The method by which political parties gain, and retain, qualified status in California is prescribed in the Elections Code in §§5000-5200.

In order to **achieve initial** qualified status, thereby allowing a political party to participate in a state-sanctioned primary election to nominate candidates for the November general election, a proposed political party must:

1. Hold a caucus or convention to elect temporary officers and designate a party name; §5001(a)
2. File a formal notice with the Secretary of State, declaring that the political body has organized, elected temporary officers, and declared an intent to qualify as a political party pursuant to Elections Code §5100. This notice must include names and addresses of the temporary officers of the political body; §5001(b)

and

3. No later than 135 days before the primary election in which they wish to participate, achieve a statewide **registration** with that party designated by registrants equaling at least **1% of the total votes cast at the preceding gubernatorial election:** §5100(b)

or

No later than 135 days before the primary election in which they wish to participate, file with the Secretary of State a **petition** signed by voters equal in number to at least **10% of the total votes cast at the preceding gubernatorial election.** §5100(c)

Currently, in order **to qualify by registration**, a new party needs **86,212** registrants. **To qualify by petition 862,113** signatures are needed.

ONCE QUALIFIED, a political party MAINTAINS its qualified status by:

1. Retaining registrants representing at least 1/15 of 1% (.00067%) of the total state registration (based on the Report of Registration published by the Secretary of State with respect to voters registered as of October 5, 1999, the 154th day before the primary election); §5101

and

2. Having one of its statewide candidates (running for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Controller, Treasurer, Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner or United States Senator) receive at least 2% of the state vote **cast for that office** in the preceding gubernatorial election. §5100(a)

or

Retaining statewide registration equaling at least 1% of the total votes cast at the preceding gubernatorial election. §5100(b)

There are currently seven qualified political parties in California. In addition to the Democratic and Republican parties, which have participated in state primary elections since 1910, six other parties have qualified since 1967. In 1968, both the American Independent Party and the Peace and Freedom Party qualified by the voter registration method. The Libertarian Party achieved the requisite number of registrants in 1980; the Green Party reached the required number in 1992; and the two most recent parties to achieve recognized political status in California were the Natural Law and the Reform parties, garnering the requisite number of registered voters in 1996. At the time of this booklet's publication the Peace and Freedom Party had failed to meet the threshold needed to maintain its status as a qualified political party in California, based on the November 3, 1998 election results. October 24, 1999, is the deadline for any party seeking to qualify or requalify to participate in the March 7, 2000 primary.

Since the statewide party nomination process began in 1910, eighteen parties have qualified to participate in primary elections, including:

*	Democratic 1910-present	Commonwealth 1934-1938
*	Republican 1910-present	Communist 1934-March 1944
*	Independence League 1910	Progressive 1934-1938
*	Prohibition 1910-1962	Townsend 1938-1942
*	Socialist 1910-1938	Independent Progressive 1948-1954
	Progressive ("Bull Moose") 1912-1918	American Independent 1968-present
	Liberty 1932-1934	Peace and Freedom 1968-1998
		Libertarian 1980-present
		Green 1992 - present
		Natural Law 1996 - present
		Reform 1996 - present

Prior to 1910, many parties either conducted conventions or held primary elections to select their candidates for the statewide general election.

* The five parties whose names are preceded by an asterisk were active before 1910.

Partisan Offices

<u>Office</u> ¹	<u>Term of Office</u>	<u>Term Begins</u>	<u>Number of Districts</u>	<u>Qualifications</u>
President	4 yrs.	Jan 20, 2001 (12:00 noon)	N/A	Natural born citizen of the United States, at least 35 years of age, resident of the United States for at least 14 years.
United States Senator	6 yrs.	Jan. 3, 2001 (12:00 noon)	N/A	At least 30 years of age, registered voter, citizen of the United States for at least 9 years, resident of the state when elected.
United States Representative in Congress	2 yrs.	Jan. 3, 2001 (12:00 noon)	52	At least 25 years of age, registered voter, citizen of the United States for at least 7 years, resident of the state when elected.
State Senator	4 yrs.	Dec. 4, 2000	20 (odd - numbered)	Citizen of the United States, registered voter in the district at the time nomination papers are issued. ² May not have served two terms in the State Senate since November 6, 1990.
Member of the Assembly	2 yrs.	Dec. 4, 2000	80	Citizen of the United States, registered voter in the district at the time nomination papers are issued. ² May not have served three terms in the State Assembly since November 6, 1990.

¹Any candidate for state partisan office shall have been registered with the political party the nomination of which he or she seeks continuously for not less than three months prior to the time of presentation of his/her Declaration of Candidacy or, if eligible to register for less than three months, for as long as he or she has been eligible to register to vote in California. The candidate shall not have been registered as affiliated with a political party other than that party within twelve months immediately prior to the filing of the Declaration of Candidacy. This party affiliation requirement is not applicable for candidates of political parties participating in their first direct primary election subsequent to their qualification as political parties. §8001

²Article IV, Section 2(c), of the California Constitution requires one year residency in the legislative district and California residency for three years. However, it is the legal opinion of our office that these provisions violate the U.S. Constitution.